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# THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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## Southern Baptists begin Japan relief

TOKYO (BP and local reports) — It took six days for Southern Baptist disaster relief specialists from Alabama and South Carolina to gain access to Japan's tsunami- and earthquake-stricken Tohoku prefecture. It only took a few minutes, however, for them to understand the intense fears surrounding the nuclear crisis and how it affects disaster response.

Hardly anyone was at the Tokyo airport when John Hayes of Birmingham, AL, and Eddie Pettit of Sunset, S.C., arrived March 19. With no traffic, the bus trip into town took only an hour that Saturday, a ride that normally takes two or more. Even the busiest crosswalk in the country only mustered 15 to 20 people. Normally this corner is a sea of hundreds dressed in black business suits, jockeying for space to cross the street.

Despite living more than 200 miles from the failing Fukushima nuclear plant, Tokyo residents stayed home, creating a "ghost town" atmosphere. In a city of nearly 13 million people, most venture out only to purchase bottled water and toilet paper.

"The fear of radiation is really the biggest obstacle in responding to Japan's disaster," Pettit admits. "It's not only affected the Japanese but it's dominated the media and created fear throughout the world. We have to convince the people in the States that it's safe to work here. I want Southern Baptists to know that the radiation scare is a lot worse in the States than it is here now."

Tokyo and surrounding areas are slowly coming back to life three weeks after the nightmare began. People are venturing back to work and restaurants are reopening. The fear, though, is still hidden just below the surface. It comes out in simple things like wondering if fruit or vegetables came from Fukushima, or if the tap water has radiation contamination.

The possibility of radiation is always in the back of people's minds, especially when members of Tokyo Baptist Church sit around a table to talk with Hayes and Pettit about ways to launch a disaster relief ministry amid Japan's triple disaster.

Every idea put on the table immediately gets thrown into the "do later" pile as team members grapple with how to handle the nuclear crisis. It seems the radiation concern is a roadblock to every ministry possibility, until Hayes quietly pulls out something that looks like a credit card. He peels back the red plastic and points to the blue dot on the radiation detection card, called a dosimeter.

"Look, I've been wearing this ever since I arrived in Japan and it hasn't registered any radiation exposure levels yet," Hayes says, noting that all Southern Baptist workers and their children were issued a card to measure their exposure to radiation. This allowed them to return to their ministries and homes.

"Volunteers will wear one of these cards at all times, too. We want everyone safe while they are ministering in this disaster," Hayes pointed out.

Having a way to measure radiation exposure changes the climate of the meeting. It goes from "What will we do in the future?" to, "Let's do something now." The timing



FIRST SHIPMENTS — Pat Melancon (left) of Baptist Global Response opens food and supplies brought into a neighborhood in Ishinomaki, Japan, on March 28 by a Southern Baptist relief team. Melancon is leading the disaster response team, which included Eddie Pettit (center) of South Carolina and Kevin Qualls, an International Mission Board church planter based in Sendai, Japan. (BP photo)

could not have been better. The very next day, the Japanese government lifted restrictions to most areas of the disaster zone.

Tokyo Baptist Church immediately sent the newly trained disaster relief team in one direction, and Hayes and Pettit go another. All leave with a dosimeter hanging around their necks, offering a sense of safety but not invincibility.

Pettit says the long wait to actually visit some of the disaster area for assessment is not normal for their teams. In other natural disasters, the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Network responds immediately and hits the ground running. In Japan, however, they are just now making their first assessment trip into the heart of the region struck by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

Radiation fears have little to do with this delay; the main reasons are government restrictions and the lack of gasoline.

"Developing countries do not have a disaster plan or the infrastructure Japan has," Pettit says, explaining how important it is to work within the Japanese system and not just respond unilaterally, like many did after Haiti's earthquake a year ago. "Each disaster is different and this one is three disasters in one: earthquake, tsunami, and radiation fears. It doesn't matter how long it takes us to get established, there is going to be plenty of disaster work for a long time."

Any fears of radiation are quickly forgotten as Hayes and Pettit survey an area safely outside of the 50-kilometer radiation zone suggested by the United States. The magnitude of this disaster and the need for future relief work sinks in as the pair walk down the streets of Ishinomaki. Despite Japanese government forces working around the

clock since the quake, the destruction is still overwhelming, a stark contrast to the normally pristine and orderly Japanese lifestyle.

Hundreds of cars pile up at odd angles. Some stack on top of each other three or four high. Broken boats sit stranded on side streets and open lots. Ships lean to one side on empty roads. Seven-foot-high walls of trash line streets outside homes filled with a foot of mud.

Hayes and Pettit see many ways specialized Southern Baptist disaster relief teams could work and minister, filling in behind government forces: shoveling mud, providing hot meals, and distributing supplies — if they were invited by the government. They stop to talk to a family who owns a kimono store destroyed by floodwaters.

"We need to help get the mud and debris out of the houses. That's pretty labor intensive," Hayes says. "It might seem small to us, but it will plant a seed. We can show the love of Jesus Christ and make a difference."

The Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, based in the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson, has not been activated as yet for service in Japan.

A fund has been started for aid to Japan. Donations received will be channeled to Baptist disaster relief work in Japan as opportunities are identified. Checks should be made payable to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, with "Japan Disaster Assistance" noted on the memo line.

Donations may be mailed to MBCB Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. No in-kind donations are being accepted at this time.



# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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## Troubled waters

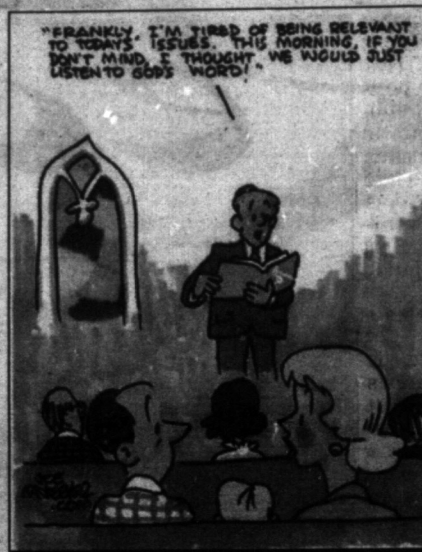
We live in a time of "emerging" churches, "satellite campuses," and "blended" worship services. Some churches have dropped "Baptist" from their names, and some now refer to Sunday School not as Sunday School but as "Bible Study Hour." That is, if they haven't dropped Sunday School altogether in favor of small home meetings during the week.

"We don't have a worship service at my church any longer; we have an entertainment hour," lamented a Mississippi Baptist not long ago. "My pastor doesn't even bring his Bible to the pulpit on Sunday," said another Mississippi Baptist from the other side of the state. "All we hear are lectures on pop culture and 'feel-good-about-yourself,' Joel Osteen-style messages." (Osteen is a popular TV preacher from a Word of Faith background.)

The Journey, a St. Louis church plant, was featured on network television some time ago for Theology at the Bottleworks, a church-sponsored "discussion group" that meets over beer in a bar. "You sit down over a glass of wine or a pint of ale or something like that, and you can connect with people more," one attendee told the television crew.

It's safe to say that the Christian Church has undergone a few changes over its 2000-year history. The Church has adapted to circumstances, good and bad. Some of those changes turned out well, and some were mistakes (to say the least). Many of the good ideas served a purpose and were retired after a very useful life. Many of the bad ideas have come and gone, too. Some of the good has stuck around, as has some of the bad.

The point is that while all change is not good, change is not entirely bad, either. In some of the examples above, people have taken change too far in an effort to respond to cultural pressures they are apparently feeling. Such cultural pressure is not isolated to Mississippi Baptists or Southern Baptists.



The Episcopal Church in America, for another example, decided a few years ago to condone and openly support the elevation of minister Eugene Robinson, a practicing homosexual with a live-in lover, to lead the Diocese of New Hampshire. Many of the member denominations of the worldwide Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church in America is a member, have condemned that decision, but the Episcopal Church in America has been steadfast in its decision to bend to cultural pressure in this important area.

These are troubled waters we are presently attempting to navigate. It would be easy to simply say change is good — because it often is — but we must in all things guard against the watering down of the central message of our faith in the name of change.

Namely, that a loving and just God chose to reveal Himself through His Son Jesus Christ, so that all who believe can be saved and enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven (John 3:16).

There are manifold ways to deliver that simple message to a lost world. The problem is that too many of us have gone too far afield, complicating the message or even compromising it just to get people in the door.

There's nothing wrong with conducting a Saturday evening worship service, but it is wrong to tell people there may indeed be avenues open to God other than a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

There's nothing wrong with drums and electric guitars in church, but it is wrong to say that sin and the eternal damnation it brings are outmoded or discredited concepts.

The lists, and the arguments about the lists, could go on and on, but one point we must never forget in our rush to contemporize all things religious: Hell is hot, Heaven is sweet, and Jesus saves. Let's get busy and take that eternally-unchanging message to a lost world (Matthew 28:18-20). The rest will take care of itself.

## GUEST OPINION:



### Parents, wake up!

By Diane Montgomery  
Ft. Worth, Texas

among their peers is judgment based on outward appearance. They're constantly being told by the world that their worth and potential popularity is based on how pretty they are.

We must instill in them and show by example that God desires an inner beauty which is what actually makes a girl beautiful (1 Peter 3:3-4).

• **Help Preserve Sexual Purity.** God places a huge emphasis on sexual purity and fleeing from situations that have even a hint of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6; Ephesians 5:3).

As their earthly guardians, parents are the ones in charge of protecting daughters from sexually themed situations and protecting their hearts and minds from things they can't comprehend fully or handle emotionally. Young girls today are bombarded with sexual images and messages that can do major psychological damage if parents aren't there to censor and protect them.

• **Discipline and Teach Them in the Lord.** God has called parents to do two main things: discipline in the Lord and teach the Lord's instructions (Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:6-10; 11:18-19). God has made parents an authority, to act on His behalf (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17).

It's for her protection and to help preserve her innocence, for her to know that God has a standard for her behavior. As God shows His children grace, mercy and discipline, so are parents to follow His example with their children.

Parents control what their daughters watch, what they wear, and how they act. If parents don't help preserve their daughter's innocence, who will? If parents don't help protect their daughters from the consequences of sexualization, who will?

Girls like those on *Toddlers & Tiaras* who are throwing tantrums, calling themselves divas, and saying to their mothers, "I can do whatever I want," will grow up to be women who are brash, conceited, self-worshipping, and who find value in their sexuality. They will be the queens and princesses on the throne of their heart, unless they let God become ruler of their hearts.

When girls are taught the ways of the Lord from an early age, they're more likely to become respectful, gentle, kind, and God-fearing women. They won't be filled with vanity or rivalry, but with concern for others (Philippians 2:3). When girls are taught to be modest, virtuous, and remain sexually pure as a way of glorifying the Lord, they're more likely to be godly women.

Ultimately a girl will make the choice to put God on the throne or not, but until that time comes it's a parent's job to give her the wisdom of God's teachings, show her who God is, and help protect her.

Montgomery is a student at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. This column first appeared at *GirlsGoneWise.com*, a website for Christian women. Montgomery blogs at *www.unlockingfemininity.com*. Her commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

## Chinese authorities escalating persecution

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Chinese government intensified its pressure against Christians in 2010 for a "fifth straight year of escalating persecution," according to ChinaAid Association, a Christian human rights organization based in Washington.

Beatings, torture, arrests, harassment, and church demolitions are among the 90 recorded cases of persecution, a nearly 17% increase over 2009, according to a report released by ChinaAid on March 31.

The cases "are just the tip of the iceberg," according to a ChinaAid news release. "The Chinese government's stranglehold on information and the authoritarian regime's other security measures make getting a true picture of the extent of persecution impossible. Nevertheless, the fact that the documented incidences of persecution came from all parts of China and involved people from all levels of society makes the report a useful guide."

The report suggested the increase in persecution may have been triggered by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo and the thwarted attendance by more than 200 delegates from Chinese house churches at the Lausanne Congress on Global Evangelization in South Africa.

The report stated that Chinese authorities, in addition to continuing to target house churches and their leaders in urban areas, are adopting three additional tactics of persecution:

- The government is severely cracking down on Christian human rights lawyers, who have increasingly defended persecuted Christians in the country's court system. More than two-thirds of persecution cases in Beijing involved such lawyers who are subjected to harassment, beating, and abduction.
- While the government is decreasing official prison sentences against Christians who can defend themselves in the legal system, Mafia-type violence and intimidation is being used which leaves Christians no legal recourse.
- The government is punishing Three-Self Patriotic Movement Churches (official churches) that have failed to submit to complete control. Congregants are beaten, churches forced to disband, and some buildings torn down.

The report documented 3,343 people who were persecuted in 2010, a nearly 14% increase from 2009. Detentions increased by 43%, and 336 house church leaders were persecuted. Overall, the report said persecution was more than 193% worse in 2010 than 2006.

The report, titled 2010 Annual Report: Chinese Government Persecution of Christians & Churches in Mainland China, January - December 2010, can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/fEZTHv>.

Meanwhile, reports indicate the communist government in China may consider lifting its one-child policy — but that does not mean it will terminate its practice of coercive population control, says an American advocate for women's rights.

Reggie Littlejohn is president of Women's Rights Frontiers, a coalition that combats coercive abortion, and sexual slavery in China. She says a switch to an urban, two-child policy will not soften China's population control program.

"The problem with the One Child Policy is not the number of children allowed," Littlejohn said in a written statement to Baptist Press. "Rather, it is the fact that the policy is enforced through forced abortion, forced sterilization, and infanticide. Even if some couples will eventually be allowed to have two children, the Chinese Communist Party has emphatically not stated that they will cease their appalling methods of enforcement."

Evidence from the regions already enforcing a two-child policy shows the higher limit has done little to prevent the widespread aborting of girls in a country with a heavy preference for boys. The "areas in which two children are allowed are especially vulnerable to 'gendercide,' the sex-selective abortion of females," Littlejohn said.

A study of the data from nine provinces in the 2005 Chinese national census showed 160 boys are born for every 100 girls, she said. A 2009 British medical journal analysis of the information concluded, she said, "Sex-selective abortion accounts for almost all the excess males."

The resulting gender imbalance will result in an estimated 30-40 million more marriage-age men than women by 2020, according to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. "This gender imbalance is a powerful, driving force behind trafficking in women and sexual slavery, not only in China, but in neighboring nations as well," Littlejohn said.

The enforcement of China's population control policy "causes more violence toward women and girls than any other official policy on earth, and any other official policy in the history of the world," Littlejohn said.

A two-child policy to start in 2015 was proposed at the annual



OFFICIAL DESTRUCTION — A photo smuggled out of China shows the moment the cross at the Chengnan Three-Self Church was torn down, when authorities in China's Jiangsu province forcibly demolished the building on Nov. 19 of last year. Churches that are members of the Three-Self Movement are controlled by the government, which licenses the churches and brutally prohibits the establishment of religious groups outside the front group. (BP photo)

meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the National People's Congress the week of March 6-12, according to The Lancet, a British medical journal.

If enacted, the change would discard the current one-child policy in cities. A two-child policy already is in place in rural areas and among minorities, if the first child is a girl.

Communist Chinese officials often have brutally enforced the one-child policy since it was implemented in 1979. Government actions against those found in violation have included forced abortions on women in the eighth and ninth months of pregnancy and compulsory sterilizations. Penalties also have included fines, arrests, and destruction of homes.

The program, which requires all women to have a birth permit before becoming pregnant and monitors the reproductive cycles of women of child-bearing age,

also has resulted in the infanticide and abandonment of female babies, according to reports.

Critics of China's policy point to another statistic as an additional example of the fall-out from forced population control: There are about 500 suicides a day by Chinese women, according to the World Health Organization, making China the only country in the world with a higher female suicide rate than that of males.

American opponents of China's one-child policy have urged the Obama administration and the United Nations to end their apparent indifference on the issue. They have called for President Obama to reverse his policy of funding the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which has been found to support China's program.

Obama reinstituted support for UNFPA, providing more than \$100 million to the agency the last two years.

## Looking back

10 years ago

More than 514 people attend the Mississippi Baptist Christian Performing Arts Festival at Ridgecrest Church, Madison. Over 100 different training opportunities were offered.

20 years ago

A new federal prayer-in-schools proposal exposes division in the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission over how to "return Christ to the classroom." Trustees believe the agency should support mandated prayer, but Executive Director Richard Land said such legislation is unconstitutional.

50 years ago

M.A. Huggins, general secretary of the Baptist State Convention of South Carolina from 1932-1959, states that the Cooperative Program is in danger: "Like any patient, it needs and deserves the attention of each Baptist and each church."



## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



## BIBLIOPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004  
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Clue: I = H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Four: Ten

## THE HEART OF THE PRAYER GATHERINGS

During the first three months of 2011 we held over 90 Prayer Rallies. The prayer gatherings took place mostly at public venues such as a county courthouse, city hall, or a park in the community. Sometimes the gatherings were in the bitter cold and at other times in the warm heat of the spring sun. A few of them were outside in the drizzling rain and some even took place when the snow was falling. Over 9,100 people attended these rallies, and for many — especially me — they each became a moment when we sensed that we were on holy ground.

Maybe the meaning and purpose of the prayer gatherings was expressed best by a young man in his mid-teen years. He was not attending the Prayer Rally, but he was watching it. Let me tell you about him because even though he may not have known the Lord he recognized the Lord at work and touched on the very heart of what we were hoping would take place.

It was a beautiful day and scores of people were standing on a courthouse lawn. The prayer gathering was taking place, a number of people had led in prayer, and we had sung together. One of our men from the Baptist building just happened to run into this young man and his mom and dad who were inside the courthouse.

On this particular day, Youth Court was in session. Apparently, they were there because they had to be. The young man was watching what was taking place and he asked one of our workers, "What are they doing out there?" He explained that it was a prayer gathering with an emphasis to ask everyone across Mississippi to be in prayer and to cover Mississippi in Prayer all year long. As the young man processed what he was seeing and hearing, he said to our worker, "Is that stuff



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

real to you folks?" The reply came, "Why, yes it is!" To which this young man said, "I wish it was real to me." At that point the mother said to the boy, "Come on, we have got to go!" She and the dad took the young man off to wherever they were supposed to be.

After the meeting, this incident was reported to me. While I never met the young man, I have thought about him so often and I have prayed for him repeatedly. I would desire for him that a genuine experience with our living Lord might take place in his life so that he would know that it is real. Jesus is real! His love is tangible and His presence is life transforming. Day after day as we were a part of these gatherings, our prayer before the experience was for everyone who came to have a fresh, meaningful, challenging, and encouraging encounter with God, and that it might be a God honoring and a life changing moment.

**Prayer changes things.** From a biblical perspective, you and I know that prayer changes things. It changed the disaster in the Red Sea to a deliverance experience. It changed certain death in a lion's den to a miraculous opportunity to proclaim the greatness of our God. It changed five little loaves and two little fishes into food for over 5,000 who were hungry. It changed a moment of hurt and potential bitterness as a man

died on a cross to incredible forgiveness as Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The prayer changing moments of the Bible are almost endless, but those same moments can take place within us. They did take place and they do take place. Out of these momentary meetings as crowds gathered to pray and more importantly as individuals encountered God, I have heard from many of them one after another, as they have expressed a meaningful, eventful encounter that made a difference because of prayer. Even today, I want to encourage you to stop, pray, and ask God to make Himself known afresh and anew to you and to be real to your heart.

In addition to prayer changing things, I am aware that if we are not careful, we change prayer. We start out our spiritual journey with Christ in prayer. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). It is at that moment that we experience the wonder of God lifting our burdens, taking our guilt, and cleansing our soul. Beyond that moment as we grow in the Lord, we may have a tendency to think that prayer is

not as significant or maybe it is a part of the infancy of our spiritual life. Now we are bigger, more mature, and do not need that anymore.

In fact, sometimes we move on to the busyness of church life and the multiplicity of other aspects of our spiritual experience to the point where prayer is left behind. The fact is that while we may move deeper into prayer and broader into the understanding of what God is wanting for us, in us, and with us through prayer, we must never graduate to prayerlessness. Study the life of Jesus and you will find that there is never a point in His entire life and ministry that prayer was not a key component of what God was doing through His Son.

It is there where we hope to stay and live that prayer challenges us. In John's Gospel, Chapter 15, Jesus tells us that if we abide in Him and He abides in us, then we will bring forth much fruit. It is impossible for us to abide in Him or Him to saturate our being, apart from prayer. So every day and as the Scripture challenges without ceasing, we live in the atmosphere of prayer. If Satan can entice us away from prayer, he will keep us away from God, and thereby keep us away from the joy of living in the will of God. As the young man said, "I wish that was real to me." It can be and for the believer it must be. May God saturate your life today with His presence, power, and blessings.

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# THE BAPTIST RECORD

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Church celebrates storied CP legacy

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

Many churches have legacies, be it the long tenure of a popular pastor, a history of consistent numerical growth, a stance it took in the community, or simply how long it has been in existence. For First Church, Winona, that legacy includes a decades-long commitment to Cooperative Program (CP) giving.

First Winona is probably best known in the Southern Baptist Convention as being the home church of Arthur Flake. Flake's seminal work, Building a Standard Sunday School, which encompasses "Flake's Formula," has long been the foundation of Sunday School work among Southern Baptists. These days, however, First Church, Winona, is noted for its aggressive ministry through the Cooperative Program.

Aubrey Boone has been a member of First Church, Winona, for many years and has long been a champion for CP. "Over 50 years ago we decided that the church was a missions-minded church, and agreed to give 15% of our undesignated offerings to the Cooperative Program. Our goal was to increase that by one percent a year until we reached 50%. For a long time we gave one-half percent (more each year). We've never reached that 50% goal — you know how Baptists are. It went along real good for a long time, but over the last several years we haven't talked about it like we should have."

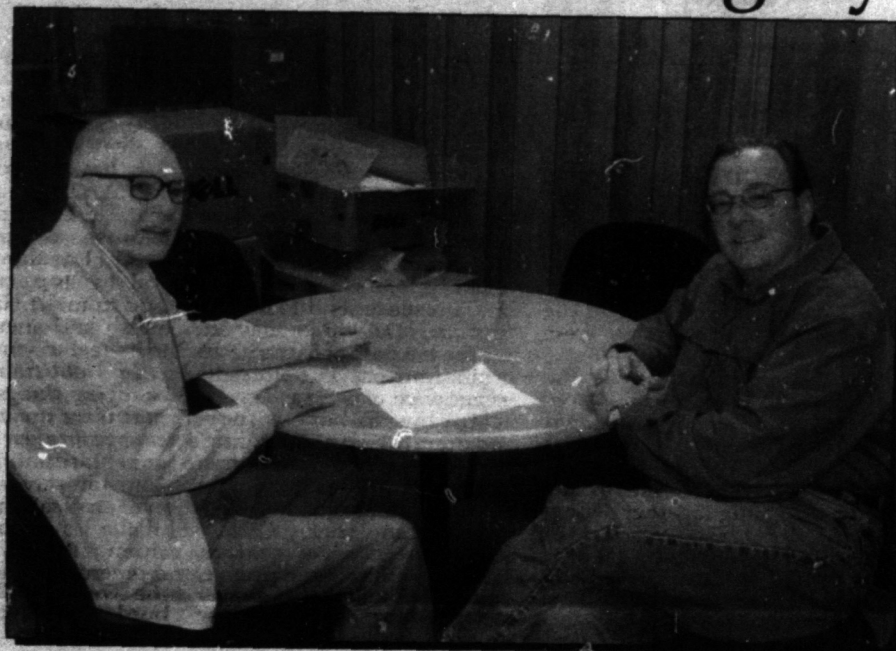
In 2009, the church gave 27.3% of undesignated gifts to CP. In 2011, 30.25% has been set aside for CP.

Dorothy Box has been a part of First Church, Winona, for 80 years. "My mother had me on cradle roll when I was two weeks old," she said. "We had gotten up to 32.5% Cooperative Program giving at one time."

"There were a lot of us who didn't really understand what the Cooperative Program was about," said Glenn Bourne, the church's chairman of deacons. "We knew it was about missions, but one of the things many of us didn't realize is that here in the state (through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board) we had assets galore funded by the Cooperative Program that we never took advantage of to do ministry in the local area here. Several of us have been made aware of this, and that has made us extremely loyal to the Cooperative Program."

"You can't be loyal to something unless you completely understand it, so when we got involved in several things and saw how the money was being used, I came back with a whole different perspective on what we were funding and what we weren't taking advantage of."

"I remember when I joined the church in 1996. I was walking up the steps out there, and I teared up because I saw the percentage the church was giving to the



PLANNING THE FUTURE — Aubrey Boone (left) and Glenn Bourne, laymen at First Church, Winona, discuss the need for Cooperative Program promotion in their church. The church currently gives 30.25% of its undesignated gifts to CP. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Cooperative Program. I thought, 'You're walking the walk and talking the talk.'"

"I had a pretty passionate discussion with a deacon about six weeks ago," said Bourne, "and he was talking about some choices that might need to be made concerning the Cooperative Program. I said, 'Let me tell you something. When the choice comes down to cutting on the lights in the building, that's the time we'll have to sit down and talk about this. Until then, you can forget about even bringing it up.' I might have overstepped my bounds, but right now we're far removed from that."

"One of the reasons I'm so thankful for the Cooperative Program is because I can remember when the missionaries would have to come around to the church and raise money," said Boone. "The schools had to come around to raise money, too, and the ones that had the best speech and the ones that looked the best got the money. Then God gave us the Cooperative Program. Then none of them would have to spend their time and money coming around to the churches. We could pool all of it together through the Cooperative Program and fund all of it. I can't conceive of anybody not wanting to take advantage of that."

"This all came about with the envelopes and the giving through Sunday School," said Box. "I remember when the deacons had to go around and knock on doors every Monday to collect money to pay the preacher. After the Cooperative Program, people were aware of what was needed and they gave. It's a

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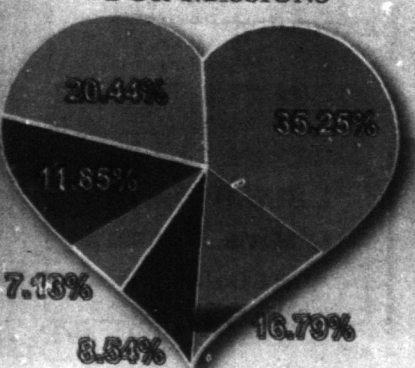
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM  
SPECIAL  
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM  
EDITION

## Correction

Due to an error in The Century Club supporters list in the Cooperative Program special insert of the March 31 issue, the dollar amounts under the headings, "CP Gifts," were incorrectly listed. The correct amounts can be found on pages CP-2 and CP-3 of this issue. The 2011 Cooperative Program budget on page CP-4 has also been corrected. The Baptist Record regrets the errors.

## 2011 COOPERATIVE PROGRAM MISSION BUDGET

### MISSISSIPPI'S HEARTBEAT FOR MISSIONS



Global Missions/SBC	\$11,633,185
Christian Education	\$6,747,000
Church Growth Ministries	\$3,908,630
State Benevolent Institutions	\$2,352,767
State Missions	\$5,541,024
Executive Leadership and Communication	\$2,819,339

GRAND TOTAL = \$33,001,945



# 2010 COOPERATIVE PROGRAM CENTURY CLUB GIVING

CHURCH OFFERINGS REPORTED ON THE 2009-2010 ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE/ COOPERATIVE PROGRAM GIFTS ARE ACTUAL RECEIPTS POSTED BY THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION BOARD FROM JANUARY - DECEMBER, 2010.

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 and below

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
NOKUBEE/MASHULAVILLE	2,185.87
PANOLA/PHARSALIA	2,136.62
CHOCTAW/CROSSROADS	1,916.18
CLARKE/KNIGHTS VALLEY	1,875.00
METRO/METRO	1,845.00
MID-DELTA/MOUNT VERNON	1,778.20
COV-JEFF DAVIS/ANTIOCH	1,719.03
MONROE/ATHENS	1,646.00
PIKE/HOLMESVILLE	1,605.15
CLARKE/PLEASANT GROVE	1,572.25

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 - \$39,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
UNION CO/MYRTLE	4,993.04
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/WAKE FOREST	4,830.00
CARROLL/SHILOH	4,691.00
LAWRENCE/SHALOM	4,044.33
KEMPER/CENTER RIDGE	4,000.00
LEBANON/BEACON	3,977.63
YAZOO/ROCKY SPRINGS	3,944.63
MONROE/SPLUNGE	3,829.71
YAZOO/EDEN	3,823.94
PRENTISS/WEST SIDE	3,789.40

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$40,000 - \$54,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
WEBSTER/NEW HOPE	7,750.00
NEWTON/ROCK BRANCH	6,991.00
GULF COAST/PERKINSON	6,332.48
CALHOUN/OLDTOWN	5,788.48
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/NEW MONTPELIER	5,740.65
MID-DELTA/LINN	5,648.80
LAUDERDALE/CENTER GROVE	5,351.80
SMITH/CONCORD	5,190.34
WINSTON/DRY CREEK	5,143.00
PEARL RIVER/NEW LIFE	5,083.02

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$55,000 - \$74,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
CALHOUN/SABOUGLA	10,610.75
CARROLL/LIBERTY	8,636.88
YAZOO/OAK GROVE	8,610.28
WEBSTER/DOLLARS GROVE	8,466.72
MARION/EMMANUEL	7,983.00
WAYNE/RIVERSIDE	7,466.56
LAWRENCE/CARMEL	7,353.92
JACKSON/KREOLE AVE	7,304.00
CLARKE/PINE GROVE	7,190.00
MISSISSIPPI/MT VERNON	7,163.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$75,000 - \$99,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
WINSTON/CALVARY	15,402.15
CLARKE/SHUBUTA	13,683.78
PANOLA/LOCKE STATION	13,118.23
MISSISSIPPI/CROSSBY	11,574.00
HUMPHREYS/BEULAH	11,448.20
ATTALA/MCCOOL	11,278.81
SHARKEY/ISSAC/VALLEY PARK	11,134.18
ITAWAMBA/DORSEY	10,790.55
CHOCTAW/WEBB	10,679.71
HUMPHREYS/FBC ISOLA	10,330.73

## The Century Club

By David Michel, MCB associate  
executive director for mission strategy

Every year churches struggle with giving and budget planning in order to have a financial plan that reflects obedience to the Great Commission. It is as much a spiritual struggle as an economic one. Churches that manage the struggle deserve to be recognized and congratulated for their efforts.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention is always ready to celebrate the mission work of its churches.

For years the Cooperative Program Century Club has been a way of expressing gratitude and recognition of outstanding mission support through congregational giving. The Century Club lists the one hundred most generous supporters in the state. The churches are chosen based on two criteria.

First, all the churches are sorted into ten categories based on local church offering amounts. The categories include churches which received less than \$25,000 a year as well as all others in graduated intervals up to the largest category of more than \$1,000,000. The first sorting is derived from Annual Church Profile (ACP) data which is voluntarily submitted to the convention each fall by cooperating congregations.

Second, from each offering category the ten largest Cooperative Program givers are chosen. The Cooperative Program data are determined by actual gifts received by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for the fiscal year

running from January to December. These records are audited each year, and each church receives a receipt verifying their gifts.

By sorting churches according to the two criteria, every congregation has an opportunity to be evaluated in comparison to other churches of similar size and giving capacity. While we celebrate every penny given to the Lord through the Cooperative Program, the comprehensive picture created by selecting one hundred churches spread over all giving categories helps Mississippi Baptists recognize the most sacrificial and courageous mission supporters among us.

Perhaps the greatest cue we can take for how best to recognize and celebrate generosity among our churches comes from the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians concerning the practice of the Macedonians. He said: "They did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping God's will." (II Corinthians 8:5). Today, churches which are willing to be sacrificial in giving and missional in cooperating together with Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program prove themselves to be "keeping the will" of God and committing themselves to their fellow believers for the advancement of the Kingdom.

They deserve our honor and respect, as we dedicate this year's listing of the Century Club to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Figures need correcting

By Jerry Mixon, director  
MBCB Stewardship Dept.

In the March 31 Cooperative Program special insert in The Baptist Record, we celebrated Mississippi Baptist churches' giving to the work of the Lord through the Cooperative Program with pictures, articles, graphics, and figures.

We deeply regret the figures printed last week as "CP Gifts" in The Century Club listings on pages CP-2 and CP-3 were in error, and that the Cooperative Program budget reproduced on page CP-4 was for the year 2010 and not 2011. When we discovered these mistakes after the newspaper was printed, the correct figures were posted as soon as possible on the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board web site ([www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org)). We also decided to reprint the Cooperative Program special insert this week with the correct figures that you see along the outside of these two pages and on page CP-4.

We sincerely apologize if this oversight caused some of our pastors

and churches undue stress or difficulties in attempting to explain this error to their congregations.

Together we have a long history of cooperation and faithful support for reaching Mississippi and the world for Jesus through the Cooperative Program. Thank you for entrusting us each year with the opportunity to partner with you to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

We have republished the special insert this week not only to make the necessary corrections, but also to again highlight and celebrate the sacrificial giving of our churches. Thank you to the pastors, churches, and all Mississippi Baptists for your faithfulness to the Lord.

One day we shall all gather around the throne and lay our crowns at the feet of Jesus. Until then, we ask for your prayers, personal involvement, and continued support as together we seek to reach Mississippi and the world for Jesus.



# ... Thank You

"But generous people plan to do what is generous and they stand firm in their generosity." Isaiah 32:8

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$100,000 - \$149,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
ADAMS/CLIFF TEMPLE	28,490.73
NESHOMA/SPRING CREEK	25,130.85
MID-DELTA/SENE	22,963.80
CALHOUN/PLEASANT HILL	19,283.49
SCOTT/BRANCH	17,130.69
NEWTON/SULPHUR SPRINGS	17,070.70
TISHOMINGO/NEW PROSPECT	16,442.06
RANKIN/ROCK HILL	16,394.67
LAFALETTE/COLLEGE HILL HEIGHTS	15,131.21
JACKSON/RIVERSIDE	14,888.74

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$150,000 - \$249,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
SCOTT/SPRINGFIELD	39,876.48
PONTOTOC/ECRU	37,853.57
BENTON-TIPPAH/DUMAS	36,617.34
LINCOLN/NEW PROSPECT	35,346.41
PEARL RIVER/CENTRAL	31,270.66
HOLMES/FBC LEXINGTON	30,600.33
RANKIN/PUCKETT	30,423.74
LEBANON/RAWLS SPRINGS	30,037.00
RANKIN/CATO	29,544.38
ADAMS/HIGHLAND	28,863.39

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$250,000 - \$499,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
RANKIN/PELAHATCHEE	69,362.41
PERRY/FBC RICHTON	64,804.00
PIKE/CENTRAL	59,838.39
COV-JEFF DAVIS/FBC COLLINS	57,155.91
WAYNE/PLEASANT GROVE	55,478.60
LAFALETTE/ANCHOR	55,036.60
GEORGE-GREENE/BARTON	52,404.87
LAWRENCE/NEW HEBRON	52,395.72
COV-JEFF DAVIS/WHITESAND	52,307.92
LAUDERDALE/WESTWOOD	52,307.45

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$500,000 - \$999,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
MONTGOMERY/FBC WINONA	153,780.18
LAUDERDALE/FBC COLLINSVILLE	121,238.70
CHICKASAW/FBC HOUSTON	118,039.85
METRO/HILLCREST	100,531.83
SIMPSON/FBC MAGEE	100,205.51
LAWRENCE/MONTICELLO	100,115.48
JONES/INDIAN SPRINGS	97,000.36
RANKIN/MCLAURIN HEIGHTS	93,198.31
MARION/NORTH COLUMBIA	91,982.53
ALCORN/WHEELER GROVE	91,416.18

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$1,000,000 and above

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
METRO/FBC JACKSON	787,998.74
METRO/BROADMOOR	577,387.78
METRO/MORRISON HEIGHTS	518,431.58
LEE/HARRISBURG	400,779.50
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/FAIRVIEW	362,186.98
LEE/CALVARY	338,946.46
RANKIN/FBC BRANDON	330,618.00
METRO/FBC MADISON	325,117.88
METRO/COLONIAL HEIGHTS	301,382.39
NORTH CENTRAL/EMMANUEL	293,841.74



## 2011 MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET

### Global Missions/SBC

17.63%	International Mission Board	\$5,818,243
8.03%	North American Mission Board	\$2,650,056
7.81%	Theological Education	\$2,577,452
1.20%	SBC Operations	\$396,023
0.58%	Ethics/Religious Liberty Comm.	\$191,411
<b>35.25%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,633,185</b>

### Christian Education

8.83%	Mississippi College	\$2,915,355
7.04%	William Carey University	\$2,324,394
3.28%	Blue Mountain College	\$1,081,257
1.12%	Board of Ministerial Education	\$369,401
0.17%	Education Commission	\$56,593
<b>20.44%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,747,000</b>

### State Benevolent Institutions

2.57%	Church Retirement & Protection	\$849,281
1.96%	Baptist Children's Village	\$648,358
1.28%	MS Baptist Foundation	\$421,053
1.07%	Christian Action Commission	\$354,000
0.21%	Historical Commission	\$70,397
0.03%	MS Baptist Health Systems	\$9,678
<b>7.12%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,352,767</b>

### State Missions

0.58%	Collegiate Ministry	\$2,105,708
2.75%	Women's Missionary Union	\$906,952
2.21%	Men's Ministry	\$730,561
1.91%	Missions Mobilization	\$629,601
1.56%	Mission Strategy	\$514,634
1.10%	Church Planting	\$363,242
0.58%	Stewardship	\$290,326
<b>16.79%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,541,924</b>

### Executive Leadership & Communication

2.58%	Business/Financial Services	\$851,112
1.78%	The Baptist Record	\$586,278
1.51%	Executive Administration	\$497,480
1.31%	Communication Services	\$432,586
0.98%	Computer Information Services	\$323,534
0.39%	Convention & Convention Comm.	\$128,349
<b>8.56%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,819,339</b>

### Church Growth Ministries

2.50%	Discipleship & Family Ministry	\$826,223
1.57%	Capital Needs	\$550,000
1.65%	Sunday School	\$543,426
1.39%	Church Music	\$457,837
1.36%	Church Growth	\$448,540
1.19%	Pastor/Leadership Development	\$391,408
0.90%	Evangelism	\$297,493
0.86%	Church-Minister Relations	\$293,703
<b>11.85%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,808,630</b>

**GRAND TOTAL**  
**\$33,001,945**

## Shiloh has heart for missions

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

Shiloh Church is located in the small community of Sontag in Lawrence County, northwest of Monticello. In this rural Mississippi setting, the church has participated in significant ministries over the years and has flourished. In the belief of the pastor, that's because of a commitment to missions — especially through the Cooperative Program.

The church has been ministering to the community since 1845. Andy Fullington is the pastor. "God is doing some great things here," Fullington said. "He is moving in the hearts of people and they really seem on fire for God right now... I think a revival has broken out."

The church recently dedicated a new fellowship hall. "It's been a privilege just to be a part of what God is doing here," Fullington said. "This April, I will have been pastor two years, but I did a six month interim prior to that. This is my first pastorate, my first church, and the people really stepped out on faith when they called me. We're kind of — how should I word this? — in the middle of the country, but people come from all over."

"Missions are at the heart of Shiloh, and have always been at the heart of Shiloh," Fullington continued, "not only in just giving, but in serving. We still have a great program for RAs, GAs, and Acteens. We'll have in the high 80's (in attendance) on Wednesdays, and Sunday School will run from 110-120. Discipleship training will run from 70-80 on average."

The church has been giving more than 20% to the Cooperative Program for years. "I looked back to the 1980's to see when the church was really giving. In the late 80's and early 90's, we were giving 23% - 24%. From 1995 to 2006, the church gave 25%. The church went through a period without a pastor and things got a little rough, but even then the church was able to give 20% and this doesn't include Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, and other special offerings."

In recent times the church has maintained giving to Cooperative Program at 27.5%. "We've been able to do that even in the middle of a building campaign," said Fullington. "The Lord is working through the people here. It's very humbling. We're mostly just middle class, hard working folks who believe in giving generously to the Lord."

"Even while we've been maintaining the 20%-plus level of giving, we've gone through three building programs," Fullington stated. "One was the educational wing which was paid off in five years. Another was the remodeling of our nursery, and that's been paid off, and a remodeling of our sanctu-



**A PASTOR'S HEART** — Andy Fullington has been pastor of Shiloh Church, Sontag, for two years. Fullington states that "missions have always been at the heart of Shiloh." (Photo by Tony Martin)

ary, which is paid off. In a lot of churches, missions are one of the first areas cut when the church is building but we've been able to maintain at least 20% for well over 20 years."

Fullington received the call to ministry about three years ago. He started seminary at the New Orleans extension branch. He owns a landscaping business. His wife Donna teaches at Hillcrest School in Jackson and the couple has two children.

Fullington is bivocational. "As long as the Lord allows me to be bivocational, I'll keep the landscaping business," Fullington said, "but the work of the church always takes precedence."

The church has been loving and faithful, according to Fullington. He commutes daily from Terry. "That has been good, because our youth pastor has been able to take advantage of the parsonage," he said. "He was able to come on board after I'd been here a month. He's the first youth pastor this church has had."

The church has a huge number of children, according to Fullington. "We had 125 in Vacation Bible School. When you drive down these county roads, you don't see that many houses, but they just come out of the woods."

As evidence of the mission-mindedness of the church, Fullington said in addition to the CP giving, they have an active men's ministry that has

done local missions and ministry work. "I want our folks to be able to step out on the national level in doing missions," Fullington said. "We have had two missionaries come out of this church, and the church has been active in other local missions. Our ladies are very involved in WMU, and some on the state level. Betty Newsom is the Region 7 coordinator for the Missions Service Corps. Shane Mason, also a missionary, is trying to get back to an area in (an international mission field that is unnamed for security reasons). Several of our ladies have been involved in Honduran mission trips. Missions have been at the heart of this church."

Fullington believes part of his responsibility as pastor is to "sort of inject an excitement for missions into the church. If the pastor isn't excited about going and being involved in missions, it's going to be difficult to inspire the rest of the church."

Fullington is also a cattle farmer and has been for over 20 years. "I've come to see that it's time to slack off some in tending to cattle, and maybe it's time to tend to some sheep."

"We give all credit to the Lord for what He has done," Fullington said. "Missions were at the heart of Jesus. We're His hands and feet. Shiloh means 'place of peace,' and it's been a wonderful place of peace for my family and me."

## Myanmar quake claims Baptists; officials shun relief

**KYAKUNI, Myanmar (BP)** — A three-day Baptist meeting in eastern Myanmar turned fatal March 24 when an earthquake struck near the Laos and Thailand border. Twenty-three people were killed and 50 others injured when a Baptist church building in Kyakuni, Myanmar, collapsed.

Authorities in the military dictatorship that governs Myanmar, which is also traditionally known as Burma, are not allowing foreign relief workers into the affected areas. Myanmar Baptists are responding by taking collections in their churches and distributing simple supplies such as noodles, plastic sheeting for temporary tents, sleeping mats, and cooking oil.

The Baptists were in the middle of a worship service when the ground began to shake violently. Screaming church members scrambled outside as the building

cracked and came crashing down. One worshipper said it looked as if the "earth swallowed the buildings."

The 6.8-magnitude quake was felt as far away as Bangkok and in Hanoi, Vietnam. The town of Tachileik and surrounding villages in Shan state bore the brunt of the damage and fatalities. Official counts list 74 dead. There are fears the death toll could be much higher, once reports are received from remote areas.

An estimated 3,152 people are homeless. Nearly 90 villages have been moderately or severely damaged, encompassing more than 18,000 people.

The village where the Baptist church was located was destroyed. Not one building or structure was left standing. Government officials told survivors that they will not rebuild this village. Some have moved to neighboring communities. The majority, however, moved

a short distance into the jungle, using tents as their new homes.

Information about the true scale of the disaster has been slow to emerge, given the region's mountainous terrain, linguistic barriers, and security concerns. Communication systems and infrastructure are also poor in this area.

"From what we hear, the Lahu villages are the worst hit," a Baptist worker on the Thai border said. "Myanmar Baptists are using their own funds to try to help, at least with this initial response."

In the midst of their grief and distress, Myanmar Baptists, with some assistance from Southern Baptists, are looking past their own troubles to help their neighbors.

One of the greatest needs the local assessment team found was for safe drinking water. When the quake hit, sand spewed up and the water level rose in a process known as liquefaction, resulting in a sulfur smell and taste. Baptists are trucking in 20-liter bottles of water across the border from Thailand. Pastors are then loading the big bottles onto the backs of their motorcycles and driving through muddy, near impassable roads to deliver the water to remote villages in need.

Baptist pastors in the area say they have never experienced anything like this disaster. Three-story buildings were flattened to one. The roads have fissures and gaps, making them impassable for buses and large vehicles.

Warnings squawked over loudspeakers about staying out of homes until structures can be checked. A Baptist pastor said buildings in the hard-



**FATAL QUAKE** — Residents of Tar Lay village in Myanmar's Shan state examine fissures in the main road caused by a March 24 earthquake that destroyed much of the community near the Laos/Thailand border. Twenty-three people were killed and 50 others injured when a Baptist church building collapsed in Kyakuni while a three-day meeting was being held there. (BP photo)

est-hit areas are no longer safe because of cracks in the foundations and walls. No evacuation centers have been formed. People made their own temporary shelter from the plastic sheets and local grass.

The damage was so overwhelming that Baptists from four associations broke through strict cultural barriers, reaching out to help people who were not part of their own community.

"In Myanmar, people interact within their own people groups. The Shan people help the Shan. The Wa people help the Wa," a Baptist representative in Thailand explained. "It's just how it is. People stick with their own."

Several Baptist leaders from the different people groups crossed over into Thailand to receive a crash course on disaster relief, learning how to assess and respond to the massive devastation. They were encouraged to look beyond their own people and to reach out to the needs of others.

"I'm encouraging [local believers] to work together," said the Baptist worker in Thailand. "We can cover more ground in a shorter amount of time [if we work together]."

The Baptist worker encourages Southern Baptists to join her in praying for Myanmar disaster relief effort.

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- Unity Church, Magnolia:** Revival, April 10-13; Sun., 10 a.m. Sunday School, 11 a.m. Drama /worship followed by lunch, and afternoon service at 1:15 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Wayne Talley, speaker; Richard Fortenberry, music.
- Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol:** Revival, April 10 - 13; services, 6:30 PM nightly; Jimmy Porter, speaker.
- Airport Church, Grenada:** Homecoming, May 1: potluck dinner after 11 AM service. Lowell Ingram, speaker.
- Carmel Church, Meridian:** Homecoming, April 3; Sunday school, 9:45 AM, followed by worship at 11 AM. Potluck fellowship meal following morning worship service. Afternoon service, 1:15 PM. Franklin McClelland, speaker. Joe Anderson, pastor.
- Cedar View Church, Olive Branch:** Revival, April 10 - 13; Sunday, worship 10:30 AM and 6 PM; lunch at 12 Noon; youth emphasis 6 PM; Monday - Wednesday, 7 PM Monday, children's night and hot dog supper, 6 PM.
- Mount Olive Church, Baldwin:** Revival, April 10 - 13; Sunday, 6:30 PM; Monday - Wednesday, 7 PM; Randy Bostick, speaker. Kenneth Leslie, music; David Haynes, pastor.
- Faith Church, Charleston:** Homecoming revival, April 13 - 17; 6:30 PM nightly; Tommy Clark, Adam Blair, Randy Byrd, Truman Scarborough, and John Goldwater, speakers; David Blackwell, music.

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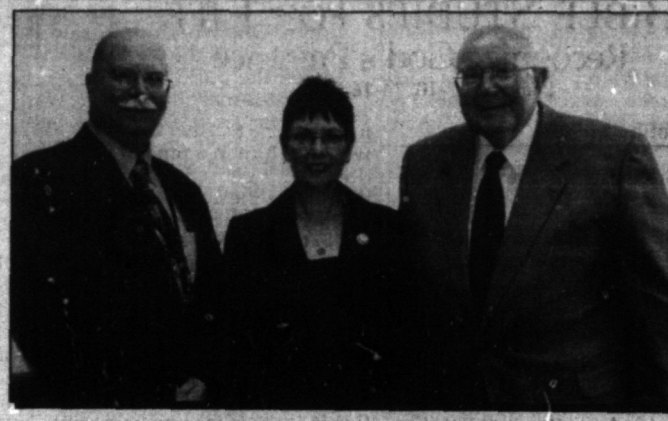
1. Nine nursing students, one nursing faculty member, and one biology student from William Carey University participated in a medical mission trip to Honduras with the Baptist Medical & Dental Mission International (BMDMI) during spring break. BMDMI has served Central America since 1974, ministering to the less fortunate through sharing about Christianity and treating medical needs

free of charge. The WCU group joined a team that consisted of 39 people from four states and 22 churches, to serve the people of Honduras in a variety of ways. The medical clinic saw 2068 people and the pharmacy filled 15,479 prescriptions over the course of the mission. The dental clinic saw 320 patients and pulled 735 teeth, and the glasses team checked the eyes of 303 people and supplied 258 of

them with reading or prescription lenses. Shown is Megan Quinn of Picayune, a Level I nursing student at WCU, checking the blood pressure of a local resident in Honduras during the mission trip.

2. Karen J. Nichols, president of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), spoke to the William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine (WCU-COM) students on March 25 in the Academic Building of the WCU-COM medical complex. Nichols is the 114th AOA president, and also the first female president. She is the dean of the Midwestern University/Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine (MWU/CCOM). In Oak Brook, IL. Shown are Darrel Lovins, dean of the WCU-COM, Nichols, and Tommy King, president of WCU.

3. After 75 years the Southern Literary Festival is returning to its birthplace at Blue



2. Lovins, Nichols, and King

Mountain College. The 75th Southern Literary Foundation, an association of 24 colleges and universities that meet annually to celebrate student creative writing and Southern writing by professionals, will be held April 7-9 on the BMC campus. The festival is open and there is no admission charge. Seven authors and playwrights—Sam and Mary Donnelly Haskell, Margaret McMullan, Robert Hamblin, Robert Dalby,

Ben McClelland and George Kehoe—will discuss and share literature with students and faculty members from the Southern Literary Festival Association. The 2011 festival begins at 7 p.m. Thursday and concludes at noon Saturday. Sessions will be held in Garrett Hall Auditorium, Fisher-Washburn, Guyton Library, and Whitfield Residence Hall. For the complete schedule, go to [www.bmc.edu/slf](http://www.bmc.edu/slf).

## Social networking ripe for marital discord; counselors advise caution

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Surveys that show Facebook, the popular Internet social networking site, being cited more and more in divorce cases should make spouses think twice before "friending" someone of the opposite sex, experts say.

A 2010 survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers showed that 81% of "the nation's top divorce attorneys" reported an increase in social networking websites being used as evidence in divorce cases. Facebook, the subject of a recent hit movie, is the leader, being cited in 66% of cases that involve online evidence.

"We're coming across it more and more," clinical psychologist Steven Kimmons of Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, IL, said in a news release. "One spouse connects online with someone they knew from high school. The person is emotionally

available and they start communicating through Facebook. Within a short amount of time, the sharing of personal stories can lead to a deepened sense of intimacy, which in turn can point the couple in the direction of physical contact."

The Facebook-divorce link has lately been discussed widely in the social media realm, thanks to a survey from the United Kingdom supposedly showing Facebook being at least partially blamed for one in five of all divorces. The data is from a U.K. online divorce service that found the word Facebook appearing in 989 of the company's 5,000 divorce petitions, all of which were uncontested. The Wall Street Journal reported. The company's managing director called the survey unscientific.

Whether or not Facebook is a reason for one in five divorces, it is becoming an increasing problem in marriages, Kimmons and other marriage experts say.

Couples should take common sense safeguards on Facebook, said Michael Martin, vice president for academic affairs and professor of New Testament studies at Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, Ca.

"People need to manage the beginning of the relationship," Martin told Baptist Press. "If somebody contacts you from your past and wants to strike up a friendship — somebody that you dated once or somebody that you knew in high school or college — there's nothing necessarily wrong with entering into that relationship. Just do it along with your spouse. Include your spouse into the conversation."

"If you're willing to do that openly, then it's likely there's

nothing at all wrong with the Facebook relationship. If you are being invited into a conversation you are uncomfortable including your spouse in, then you should not start the relationship."

There absolutely are times when a husband or wife should decline a Facebook friend invitation from someone of the opposite sex, Martin said.

Thomas White, vice president for student services and communications at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, said, "unhealthy marriages, unguarded partners, and fallen humanity," not technology, are the problem. White, who also is an associate professor of theology, offered four tips for spouses who are on Facebook:

- Give your spouse the password and the "freedom to check your Facebook at any time."
- Disable Facebook's chat function. "It provides a way to communicate without any record and can lead to a false sense of safety similar to the woman in Proverbs 7 whose husband was away," White said.
- Set all Facebook messages to forward to someone else's email address who can serve as an accountability partner.
- Don't accept a past romantic interest's friend request — or send a request — until discussing it with your spouse.

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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE Recognize God's Presence

Psalm 31:7-10, 14-16, 21-24

By Bobby McKay

Perhaps you have heard the story of the Idaho mountain climber and his conversation with God. It seems that he was several hundred feet off the ground and he came across some trouble. He lost his footing and began to fall down the side of the rocky terrain. As he continued to plummet, he was able to grab hold of a small shrub embedded in the side of the mountain. As he held on for dear life, he began to scream. "Help!" was his repeated cry. All of a sudden, a voice from the heavens boomed around him. "Let go," was the reply the man received from far above. After a few moments of deep thought, the terrified man reacted, "Is anybody else up there?"

While I cannot relate fully to the climber's dilemma, I can appreciate the desire to be com-

forted by the fact that God was with him in a time of difficulty. We continue this month's examination of grief with the reminder of God's presence. A common thought for some people is to wonder where God is when they are hurting or struggling with grief. While many feel either alone or abandoned in the midst of tough times, each of us must keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is our ever-present Helper and Comforter in good times and in bad. Our words of encouragement come from Psalm 31. A Psalm written by David, these words offer us the reminder we sometimes need that God is with us no matter our surrounding circumstances.

Excitement

Psalm 31:7-10

Make a note of the following words written by David in vers-



McKay

When our faith is weak, God is not. God's love and mercies are not circumstantial. Many believers are erratic in their zeal for God. His troubles however, did not hamper his excitement and enthusiasm that the Lord was with him no matter what. While admitting to God his difficulties, David was also excited to share about the provisions from the Father. It might be inevitable that times of adversity will come our way, but how we respond is an indication of how closely we are following Christ. It is completely understandable to confess your turmoil to God, but be sure you are striving to give Him praise for His awesome faithfulness.

es 7-10: affliction, troubles, enemies, distress, grief, sorrow, and sighing. How could this be the vocabulary of someone who is praising God? It was possible for David to honor God while in the middle of hard times because he knew that God was faithful.

Expectation  
Psalm 31:14-16

You may be asking by now, "How in the world am I supposed to praise God when I am suffering so deeply?" I promise you this type of praise that David shares is possible for me and you. Be advised though, it is not achievable in your own strength. The key is in the expectation. If you expect time, humanistic psychology, or medicine alone to help you conquer grief or depression; you will be continually disappointed. Only when we place our faith and trust in God can we embark on the journey of healing and recovery. David appreciated the sovereign power of God and he turned to Him to keep him safe in difficult circumstances. You do not have to fully understand a situation to trust in God's power. In your time of need expect God and all of His power to be right there with you.

Expression

Psalm 31:21-24

David ends this Psalm with the same gesture that we

should use in ending each day: praise! We are in an outspoken society where everyone is quick to express themselves and, share their opinions. Would it not be incredible if we as Christians were as quick to share a word of praise about the Lord as we were to share a word of criticism about others? It shouldn't stop with our voices either. We can best show our love and trust of God through loving actions to those around us that may or may not have a relationship with Jesus. When people focus on the faithfulness of God and are willing to trust Him, they will express that trust in love. We can bear and share God's love in spite of our surroundings or how we feel. Our expressions of praise are not only good for us; they can be the very thing that helps someone else in their own grief. What can you give God praise for right now? Put this paper down and do it!

McKay is pastor of Harpersville Church, Harpersville.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE Never Let Up

Philippians 4:1-23 Focus 4:1-9, 11-13, 15-19

By Cyndi Grace

Stress. Burnout. Anxiety. Much of society functions daily with these maladies. We are tired, irritable and just not in a very good mood. We have too much on our plates and have lived like that for so long we think it is normal. It is not! Paul starts today's lesson with the words, "stand firm in the Lord." This is where we find victory!

This week's passages might indicate the Philippians had a problem relying on God, which was causing a rift between some believers—good people but perhaps under stress. It was not easy to be a Christian in the early church. Lives were at stake and nerves were on edge. To this Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Strange thing to say in the midst of turmoil and disagreements but Paul was not

just speaking lofty words to comfort his friends; he had experienced pain and knew the power of rejoicing. Acts 16:22-28 is a very familiar passage but a review would serve to enhance today's lesson. In this we find Paul and Silas arrested, severely flogged, and then thrown in prison. The scripture uses the word "severely" so we know that they were beaten nearly to the point of death before being chained to the walls. This was stress. But Paul and Silas did something strange; they began to pray aloud and sing praises to God. You know the rest of the story...there came a violent earthquake, their chains were loosed, and they were set free (as were the other prisoners who had been listening.) Now look again at Philippians 4:4-7.



Grace

What do you do when life takes a detour? Be honest. If our first inclination is to call and complain to our friends, then stress will have a heyday in our lives. But, if like Paul, we begin to praise God in the midst of our trials, our chains will fall and we will have peace. There is just something about singing praise songs when life is bleak that gives us courage to "stand firm." I can give testimony to this fact time after time.

Paul then explains how to remain in that peace. Satan wants nothing more than to defeat you and his first stop is in your mind. What do you think about? No, really, what are your constant thoughts?

Jesus said what we think is what we become. If you think about how bad things can get, then chances are stress reigns in your life. I believe Paul understood this all too well. Sitting in prison, all alone, gave him much time to think but Paul was determined not to also be a prisoner of negative thoughts. He thought about true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable things. He thought about excellence and praiseworthy things and the result was God's peace. Our victory of standing firm begins with our thoughts but it goes farther than peace. Other benefits include contentment, for Paul had determined in his mind that Christ was all he needed. But wait there's more!!! If he had peace, contentment, and Christ, then he could do and survive anything that came into his life. Here we find an often quoted scripture, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." (NIV) The King James says, "I can do all things

through Christ who strengthens me!" We often quote this as a stand alone verse but friends, all the verses before, leads to this verse...we must rejoice in all things...we must keep our thoughts on the things of Christ...we must learn to be content and then we can do all things through Christ because we have found Him to be faithful in all things. Paul had discovered through his experiences that God was faithful to handle the stresses of life. He allowed God to guide his thoughts. He allowed God to show him freedom that comes from trusting.

As we close this letter, we find a thankful, joyful Paul whose final words to the Philippians was a blessing for God to meet all their needs. May Paul's words echo down to us, for we can stand firm when we, together, rejoice in all things. God is faithful.

Grace is a conference speaker and Bible teacher and is a member of First Church, Clinton.

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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Sand Hill Church



2. Bovina Church



3. Edwards and youth

1. Sand Hill Church, recently licensed Harold Williams to the Gospel ministry. Shown are interim pastor Scott Hummel, Williams, and his wife Becky.
2. Shown is Generations 2011 of Bovina Church in Vicksburg. This is a unique choir of ages 4 to 58 that sing each spring at different churches.
3. Crystal Ridge Church was honored to have Evan Edwards from Clark County give his testimony March 27. Evan was injured playing football in 1986 when he broke his neck and became a quadriplegic at age 16. Shown are Edwards and some of the students.
4. The Sonrise ensemble group recently performed at the monthly senior adult luncheon at First Church Jackson. Shown are the participants. The group is part of Reflections Choir and performs at church and adult care facilities in central Mississippi.
5. First Church, Pearl, will host the 31st annual Gospel Singing Jubilee beginning at 6:30 p.m. on May 7. The Chuck Wagon Gang; Tom Frith and the Gospel Echoes; and The Southern Plainsman will be featured.
6. The Jackson Veterans Administration Medical Center and the Mississippi National Guard will be hosting a free day of training on the needs of returning veterans on May 10. Registration begins at 8 a.m. RSVP to Chaplain Marti Reynolds at [marti.reynolds@va.gov](mailto:marti.reynolds@va.gov) or (601) 362-4471, ext. 5353.
7. First Church, Sumrall, will host the Original Inspirations Quartet members Archie Watkins and Smokey Mountain Reunion April 22, 7 PM. Free admission but a love offering will be received.
8. Southside Church, Aberdeen, will be presenting an Easter cantata entitled Christ the King on April 24, 9 AM.
9. First Church, Runnelstown, will host Maxim Ammosov of Jews for Jesus April 17 at 6 PM.
10. First Church, Batesville, is hosting a senior adult conference April 19. Registration begins at 8:30 AM. Preregistration is not required but is appreciated. For more information, call (662) 563-7655.



4. Sonrise ensemble



5. Chuck Wagon Gang at First Church, Pearl

### STAFF CHANGES

Ed Wright recently retired as pastor of Morgantown Church, Natchez. He and his wife were honored with a farewell fellowship by the church Mar. 27. He is available for pulpit supply, interim, and transitional pastorates. He may be reached at (601) 442-2009 or 807-4821.



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- From Eric McLean, minister of music, McLaurin Heights Baptist Church, Pearl, Mississippi:

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